



Indiana's Transition Initiative for Young Children and Families

MEMORANDUM

To: Directors of Special Education and Early Childhood Administrators
First Steps Local Planning and Coordinating Councils
Elementary School Principals
Head Start Grantees
Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

From: Robert A. Marra, Associate Superintendent *RM*
Lanier Degrella, Deputy Director of Bureau of Child Development *LD*
Vince Barnes, Executive Director of Indiana Principal Leadership Academy *JB*
Marie Pace, President of Indiana Head Start Association *MP*
Marsha Thompson, Executive Director, IACCRR *MT*

Re: Position Statement on Transition of Young Children

Date: October 9, 2003

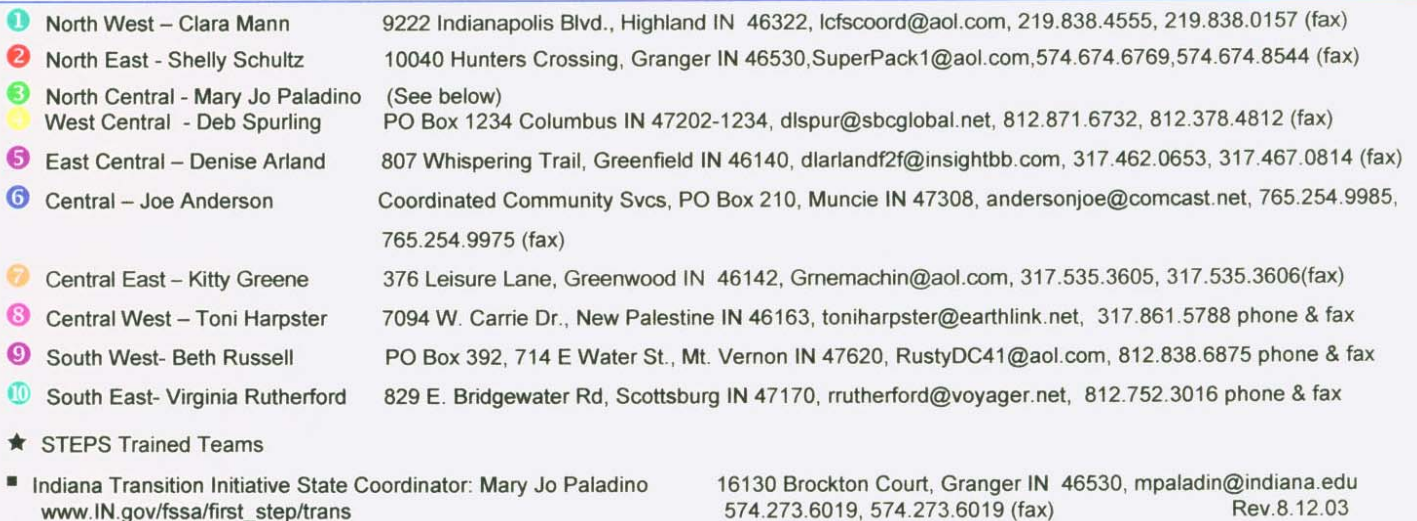
Please find enclosed a Position Statement on Transition of Young Children. The agencies and organizations affirm the need for providers and families to be community partners in developing a smooth and effective transition system. Transition planning requires a community team with all involved stakeholders that focus on transition to develop effective practices for transition preparation, implementation and follow-up for children and families and for all agencies and staff who serve them.

Change or movement from one environment to another happens. Transition is a reality. It is inevitable. It is also a matter of legality. Provisions for smooth transitions are emphasized in the federal and state regulations. The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act requires state and local agencies to have policies, procedures, and practices to address transition for children with disabilities. Head Start programs are required to address transition for all children including children with disabilities.

The goal of Indiana's Transition Initiative is to make the process meaningful to each community, not just isolated procedures. If transition is unavoidable, we know that the recommended practice of advance interagency planning is necessary to bridge the gap. The transition process can be positive and effective for everyone involved if there is advanced planning and preparation of the child, family, and staff.

The opportunity for building a focused transition team is available in your community. Interested communities may receive transition system development training and follow-up technical support at no charge. This training is also available if you have an existing team, but need to think in a more comprehensive manner or need to do some team building and develop strategies for facilitating transition with administrators, service providers, families, and children.

We realize that implementing a comprehensive transition system for young children cannot take place without the support of agency and school administrators. That is why we would like to invite and encourage your support and the participation of your staff in this technical assistance initiative. For further information, contact the Regional Transition Facilitator in your area or Mary Jo Paladino, State Transition Coordinator.



SMOOTH AND EFFECTIVE TRANSITION OF YOUNG CHILDREN

A JOINT POSITION STATEMENT OF INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, DIVISION OF EXCEPTIONAL LEARNERS INDIANA PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FAMILY AND SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, DIVISION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, BUREAU OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT (FIRST STEPS) THE INDIANA HEAD START ASSOCIATION INDIANA ASSOCIATION FOR CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL (IACCRR)

The Challenge

Transition, which involves a process of movement from one environment to another, can be intimidating and uncertain, and, from the family's perspective, a major issue.

- Families report transitions as stressful, often full of anxiety, confusion, and frustration with the transition process (Fowler, Chandler, Johnson, & Stella, 1988).
- Families report that transitions are time consuming (Johnson, Chandler, Kerns, & Fowler, 1986).
- Families express concern about the lack of coordination between professionals (Brotherson & Goldstein, 1992).

Every agency that serves young children, with and without disabilities, faces issues related to transition. As the number and type of provider agencies change and grow, or as programs change and grow, communities need to begin thinking about transition in more focused ways rather than as a series of events in a child's life.

- Agencies report frustration with the process that include: inadequate time for successful implementation, lack of commitment from community partners, lack of knowledge about partnering agencies, and lack of training regarding transition issues (Hains, Fowler, & Chandler, 1988; Rous et al., 1994).
- Because transition occurs across agencies, collaboration is essential but often given minimal attention (Rosenkoetter et al., 1994; Rous et al., 1994; Wesley & Buysse, 1996).
- Agencies report that collaborative, formalized policies and procedures are vital to the success of the transition process for all involved participants but often policies and procedures are never formalized (Rosenkoetter et al., 1994; Rous et al., 1994; Wolery, 1989).
- Recognition that change must occur at the local level is a necessary element for improvement to occur in the transition process (Rouse, Hemmeter, & Schuster, 1999).
- Early childhood transition has been identified as an area needing improvement in Indiana. Federal and state transition regulations were implemented inconsistently in many communities (Indiana Self Assessment Report Continuous Improvement for submission to US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, January, 2002).

Position

In order to address the above challenges, the Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Learners, the Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Family and Children, Bureau of Child Development (First Steps), the Indiana Principal Leadership Academy, the Indiana Head Start Association, and the Indiana Association for Child Care Resource and Referral take the position that a comprehensive, community-wide transition system is necessary

to ensure positive and effective transition experiences for children and families. We believe that this system includes:

- An interagency team that assesses the needs of the whole community, with all stakeholders involved, while ensuring the successful movement of children and families between and among agencies (Rous et al., 1994).
- Collaboratively developed policies and procedures, which are essential to the success of the community-wide transition system (Rous, Hemmeter & Schuster, 1999).
- Inclusion of the four critical components for implementing effective transitions: administrative supports, staff involvement and training, family involvement, and child preparation (Hains et al., 1988; Rosenkoetter et al., 1994; Rous, Hemmeter, & Schuster, 1999).
- Change at the local level that is supported and facilitated at the state level (Rous et al., 1999; Miller, 1992).

Transition success relies on a collaborative team approach between all agencies and individual participants within the community that fosters understanding and agreement on key transition activities, issues, procedures, and formalization of agreements. With advanced planning and preparation of the child, family, and staff, the process can be a positive, effective experience for everyone involved. Indiana's Transition Initiative for Young Children seeks to help Indiana communities assess current transition practices and train community teams on becoming a team by assisting them to identify barriers, prioritize transition activities for implementation, and develop a transition work plan. Our hope is that this initiative will serve as a catalyst for change.

SIGNATURES:



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Indiana Department of Education



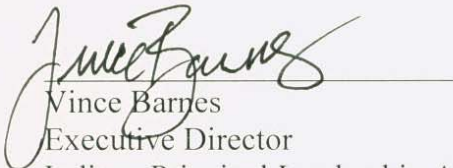
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